

U.S. - Mexico Border meeting announces Accomplishments and improved first responder preparedness *Baja California Emergency Management Institute will train personnel from both countries*

ENSENADA, MEXICO - Improved chemical spill and bio-terrorism response training along the U.S. - Mexico border as well as a new drinking water system for the Indigenous Community of San Antonio Necua, are among the successes presented at this year's National Coordinators Meeting in Ensenada, Mexico.

The National Coordinators Meeting is part of the U.S. - Mexico Environmental Program: Border 2012, a 10-year binational cooperative plan that protects public health and the environment along the 2,000-mile border region, home to approximately 12 million inhabitants.

At the annual meeting, Border 2012 National Coordinators Jerry Clifford (U.S.) and Maria Teresa Bandala (Mexico) were joined by U.S. and Mexico federal, state and local officials, and U.S. and Mexican border tribes to report on their joint progress towards decreasing air, waste, water and soil pollution, and improving the environmental health along the U.S. - Mexico border and to agree on priorities for 2007

"Over the last three years, the EPA's Border 2012 program has improved the environment by helping local communities of the U.S. and Mexico cooperatively address our common border environmental challenges and by emphasizing practical solutions at the local level" said Laura Yoshii, the EPA's deputy regional administrator for the Pacific Southwest region.

At this year's Border 2012 Meeting, the U.S. and Mexico announced the creation of the Baja California Emergency Management Institute, a public-private partnership that focuses on sustainable emergency preparedness along the border region. The Baja California Emergency Management Institute will:

- Train emergency response personnel in chemical emergencies;
- Create academic programs with binational standardization of skills;
- Future training programs will focus on how to cope with bio-terrorism.

The Baja California Emergency Management Institute's partners include the EPA, Baja California State Civil Protection, Tijuana Fire and Civil Protection Department, Mexico Attorney for Environmental Protection (PROFEPA), Autonomous State University of Baja California, and County of San Diego.

Another success presented at this year's Border 2012 Meeting was the awarding of \$55,000 by the EPA to the Pala Band of Mission Indians in California to collaborate on supporting the operation and maintenance of clean water systems benefitting indigenous communities in Baja California. EPA's \$55,000 will help maintain and operate water system investments of over \$900,000 by Mexico's Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples. The new water system replaces a fecal coliform and E. coli contaminated water system that caused severe gastrointestinal illness within the Kumeyaay indigenous community of San Antonio de Necua in Baja California, Mexico.

For more information on the Border 2012: U.S. -Mexico Environmental Program, please visit: <http://www.epa.gov/usmexicoborder/intro.htm>

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